

AMAN 50th ANNIVERSARY

Alumni Reunion

NEWSLETTER

WINTER/SPRING 2014



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WOW DE WOW WOW!

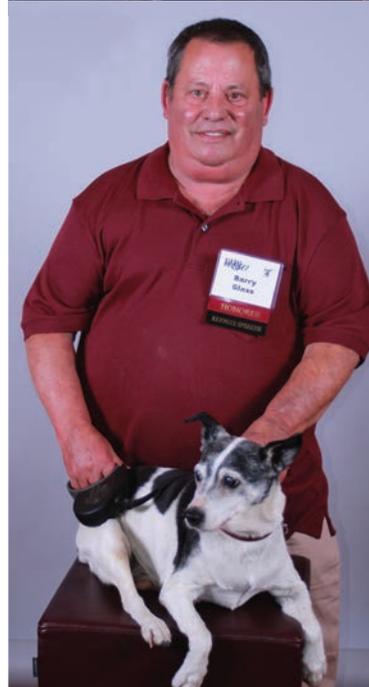
*– It is Evident –
A Good Time Was
Had By All*

The Proof is in the Pictures

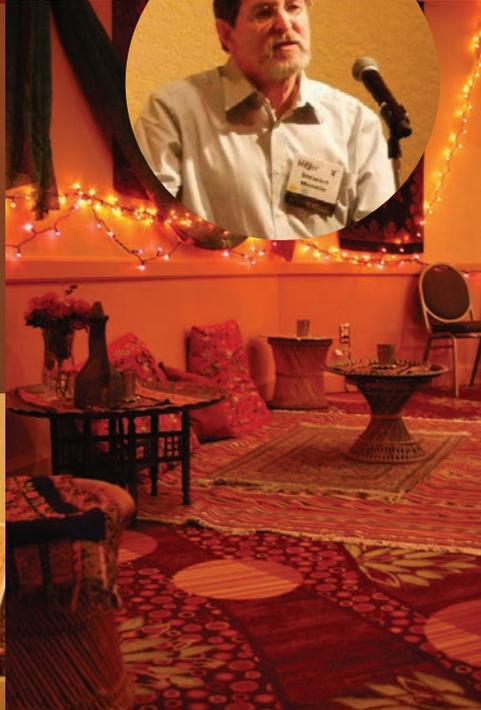
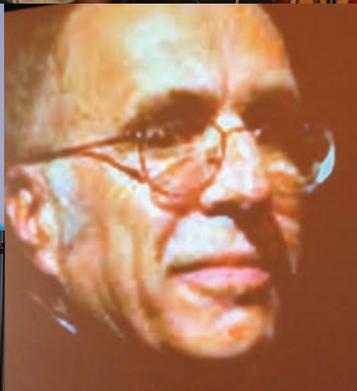
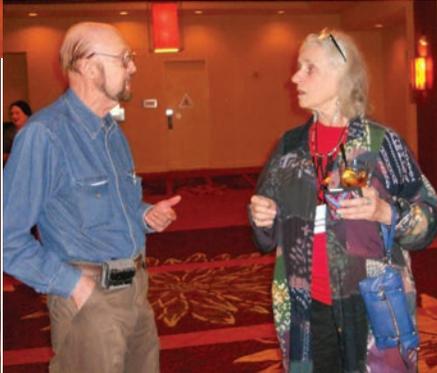


As my dad Mel used to say about remarkable persons, places and things; "Wow de wow wow!" My sentiments exactly. The 50th is a highlight of my life, which is already sooo embellished by AMAN. It's the "Life Frame of Reference Index" and mine was enhanced at every rehearsal when I was swept away to mysterious, far-off places. Where do we go for more? Can we have more? Count me in to make it happen. If it's in LA, I may have an extra bed for whomever. Seriously.

– Laila Luria



WOW DE WOW WOW!



WOW DE WOW WOW!



AMAN 50 THROUGH MY EYES

By Susie Burke

I think we'd all agree there was a bit of magical pixie-dust sprinkled over the AMAN50 gathering in Palm Springs. The joy and excitement we all felt when we saw each other was electric, immediate and tangible; like another person in the room with us at all times. We were amazed, yet happily embraced it all.

For me personally, the weekend was a blur of responsibility and work, relief it was going well, pride in my fellow committee members, excitement at just being there with everyone and hugs...lots of hugs. And while this experience is still somewhat fresh in my mind I thought that I'd share what the weekend was like from my perspective as "fearless leader."

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Wednesday — The car broke down. Uh oh, not a good start. Thankfully was able to hitch a ride with Charlie & Mitzi to PS. Poor Billy stayed behind to get our car fixed...stress!! Then busy with things once at the hotel, my crew from Folklore Camp arrived 😊 and we gathered for pizza and Charlie's b-day cake that evening. Car finally fixed 10pm, Billy will load and come down early tomorrow. Sigh of relief...here we go!

Thursday — Billy's here with all our stuff...whew!! Nibble of muffin, sip of strong tea then off to decorate and set up. Lots of happy helping hands all working together to make "real" the visions that have long been dancing around in my head. Very cool what Bev and her crew are doing with the decorations. Mitzi's timeline and

pictures are going up...wow! And Laurie's organizational skills soar at the registration table. John's setting up Kafana sound and

Barbara's got everything under control with the hotel. The rooms are beautiful and we're done. Off for a short rest, then dinner out with friends.

Back from dinner a few minutes late due to a "chili cook-off" happening downtown, no parking & huge crowds. Was expecting everyone to be in the memorabilia room when I returned per the schedule...but instead all were in the bar! Go figure that—ha. Eventually everyone into the Kafana where I do believe no one took a breath for hours...just constant talking, hugging and laughing... loud love! I welcomed everyone to the weekend and off we flew. >>>



The Committee— most of 'em, anyway

>>> **Friday** — Up early, more tea and loving support from my crew. Billy's busy setting up sound for teachers and prepping the rooms. Sean and Daniel (my boys) are going to rehearse the men's parts for Ladarke today (proud). We meet up with "uncle Barry" to go over sectionals...got it! Then I float from room to room — it's working, people are coming to the workshops. Barbara and Patti are setting up the vendors and auction tables, the room is very busy. Then suddenly the sounds of Sohu drums call to me. Happy and smiling as I watch these ladies dancing to these rhythms again after so long...soaring!

Ladarke workshop and run-through with the band was a ton of fun-fun-fun!!! Lunch set up out on the patio. Hooking up with new arrivals, more hugs and kisses, hanging with friends, listening to the Tamburica serenade us, harkening back to yesteryear.

AMAN panel discussions are being well received, packed house, very interesting to hear the stories and history of AMAN by the people who lived it. Sprinkles of emotion, laughter and a real bond is in the room between the

keynote speakers, panelists and the audience. Paula, Billy and Ronda do a stellar job officiating. Vindicated...not such a bad idea after all.

More arrivals, kissing and hugs. Dinner was so beautiful decorated by the girls with the outdoor lighting on the patio, flowers and candles on the tables, Mexican textiles everywhere. One of my favorite memories of the weekend — Ole! The Mexican buffet tasted amazing, why am I totally addicted to these cheese enchiladas? Then I realized (two



drinks later) I'd not taken but two bites of lunch and I was starving! Sugary Churros, Dobar Večer, Tri Jetrve and more — singing with friends and the boys in the band — happy. Dance party starts, great music, short tribute to Jack Kinneer and Tahitian dancing by his ladies, more dancing and friends arriving. Want to stay up but around 10pm strong urge to be in pj's with my feet up. Barbara willing to stay late and close out Kafana bar. So got some much needed rest, but sad to have missed out on Loretta and Paul's Scandinavian set and



the Mediterranean Mix Set in the dancehall. Oh well...

Saturday — Billy and I up way too early to cook pancakes for AMAN50 donors, slicing fruit, mixing and warming syrup... what WAS I thinking? Not too many people braved the early hour, but for those that did we shared wonderful conversation and food with them...in the presidential suite no less. Clean up, Billy dashing off for Jerry's class, floating from room to room again making sure all is going well — it is. Steve the sound guy and a few more musicians arrive, settle everyone into place. Another great panel discussion, pioneers in the early Balkan music scene one and all. The rest of the day spent focused

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>>> on the Banquet dinner and award program. Nervous, there are lots of loose ends to tie up. 5pm— should I head back to the room for a shower...or off to the Nevenka rehearsal for Dragana? Hard choice but Hygiene (and a rest) won out. Luckily, got to sing with my fellow Nevenki later that night, another great highlight for me.

Happy Hour buzzes around me, everyone looks so nice all dressed up. Flashes of pictures



being snapped down the hall. More AMANite arrivals, hugs and kisses. Mad dash on finishing touches, banquet tables are beautifully decorated. Bev has outdone herself! Took only a few bites of food, Michael begins the award program, excited, worried about my speech, will I make it up the stairs onto the stage (damn knees). Under the lights, feeling very humbled by all the attention...overwhelmed and proud of the committee. Sitting back at my table, my food's gone...bummer. Lights down, they roll the "In Memoriam" video by Mitzi— not a dry eye in the house. Presenters begin; honoree awards given out, moving speeches. Taking it all in, the room is honoring our leaders in perfect harmony of spirit, gratitude and love... this is what it's all about. Željko gives his heartfelt introduction for the big LADO surprise greeting for Tony... then Lado is up on the screens singing Dobar Večer and sending us congratulations. Awesome! Banquet done, I'm drained emotionally and need



some fresh air but didn't make it past the foyer from all the people wanting to say thank you... overwhelmed, I'm a bit numb by now. Then Mark Forry catches my eye...and it's time for the Ladarke sing-along. What can I say? Singing that beautiful piece of music with all of you again was THE highlight of my weekend... such a joyous thing. After that, shoes off, they hurt, Michael Adams buys me a stiff drink, and I settle in for some dancing, listening and partying till the wee hours.

In the end, after a LONG nap on Sunday, I found myself sitting around the fire-pit, with drink in hand, reliving the weekend and sharing moments of past glory with a few fellow AMANite stragglers. Exhausted, happy and satisfied.



When I got back to the real world and my co-workers and family asked me "how was it" I struggled to find the words to relay just how important it had all been to me. How best to express to non-AMANites all the fantastical things that had happened while we were gathered. But nothing I said had any context for them, so instead I just smiled and said "fantastic, a real success"... and indeed it was!

We heard your cry...

Let's Keep the Connection Going!

The *AMAN Alumni Committee* loved the idea put before us by Gwoon Tom that we should follow up the great success of the **AMAN50** weekend by skipping ahead and having a **“100th” Anniversary Party** THIS YEAR! We had such a good time with each other, and being the realists that we are, thought *WHY WAIT?* Plus we wanted to give people who couldn't make the 50th reunion a chance to join in on the fun...as soon as possible!

So, mark your calendars folks 'cause we'll be having a chillaxin' **AMAN100 Shindig & Reunion Party** on 11/08/14—with a couple of AMAN Tribute Classes & Sing/Play-alongs (*late afternoon*), cash bar Happy Hour Schmooze Fest w/appetizers & Buffet Dinner (early evening) and a happenin' Balkan/International Dance Party with live music (*till I am*)... plus a few more fun surprises along the way I'm sure.

AMAN100 will be held at the *Santa Monica Bay Women's Club*, 1210 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, California. And as usual **all are welcome to attend—AMAN alumni, family & friends, along with our extended Café Aman, AVAZ and LA folk community family**. This party is open to anyone who wants to come help us celebrate AMAN and that moment in time within our larger folk community that we all shared.

Tickets will go **on sale IN THE FALL** (4-5 weeks out from the event) through **Brown Paper Tickets**, probably in the \$35-\$50 /person range for the full package that includes dinner, but it's just a guess at this early stage in the planning. However, our focus with this party is WAY more relaxed and the prices will reflect that. Plus there will be an ala carte option to pay for just the nighttime party. Our goal is not to have an expensive elegant event like AMAN50, just a nice gathering so we can play, sing & dance a little, eat & drink a little, talk & laugh a lot and STAY CONNECTED.

Watch for upcoming information on pricing, scheduling, places to stay, possible home share and volunteer “work-exchange” opportunities as they become available and **SAVE THE DATE** of **Saturday, November 8th, 2014!** —*The AMAN Alumni Committee*



Welcome to the **AMAN Folk Ensemble** **Alumni Society** (our New Name!)

~ and our New Website for the Latest and Greatest News
and Information about **AMAN Alumni** goes on ~

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Opa! —Thought Bubbles from the Greek Chorus

How I Learned “Sohu” and the Fate that Followed...

Jean (Margolis) Henigson



I WAS ONE OF ABOUT FIFTEEN MODERN DANCE students who sat on the fine wooden floor of the dance studio in the old Womens’ Gym at UCLA. We waited anxiously for the class to begin. It was 1964, and this was our first exposure to African dance technique.

Our guest teachers were Mr. Robert Ayitee and Mr. Robert Bonsu, Ghanaian masters of drumming and dance with the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology. We listened politely as the very proper, dignified, white-haired head of the Dance Department, Dr. Alma Hawkins, introduced them. She then turned the class over to Mr. Ayitee, who would teach the dance. Mr. Bonsu, quiet, shy, and handsome, sat on a chair behind him, holding a long-barrel Ghanaian drum between his knees.

Mr. Ayitee was about 5’3” tall, thin, with knobby knees. He wore the military-like outfit of the British schools which he had attended: brown khaki short-sleeve shirt with khaki shorts. His bare feet replaced the

usual high socks and boots. In our black leotards, tights, and calf-length dance skirts, we must have looked, to them, like a gathering of spiders.

We waited. Then Mr Ayitee addressed us with: “Ten-shun!!!” We stared at him, stunned. He, equally stunned, repeated the command more loudly, “Ten-shun!!!” We looked at one another and stood up, expecting to be directed to form whatever spatial arrangement he wanted us to form. Mr. Ayitee continued with very precise instructions: “When I say ‘Attention,’ you stand like this (he demonstrated a typical military stance: feet together, chest out, chin in, eyes ahead, arms at side). Then he repeated, “Ten-shun!!!,” and this time we all imitated his stance.

We drilled that command a few times until Mr. Ayitee said, “At Ease!!!” We maintained the same posture but relaxed a bit. Mr. Ayitee was disappointed. He then demonstrated the correct response for that command: feet apart (i.e., 2nd position), hands clasped >>>

>>> behind back, gaze toward instructor. Again he snapped, “At Ease!”

To tell the truth, I really don’t remember much about the actual dance movements he taught after that. However, it must have been inspiring enough for me to want to learn more because I continued by attending Mr. Ayitee and Bonsu’s teaching sessions down in the basement of UCLA’s Schoenberg Hall.

While Mr. Ayitee taught the dancers, Bonsu helped the musicians learn to play their parts on each of the various instruments. Then the whole group practiced putting it all together.

(I don’t know why, but we always said “Mr. Ayitee” and “Bonsu.” Perhaps it was because Bonsu was younger and may not have had the credentials or experience to rate being called “Mr.”)

Up to this time, my experience had primarily been in ballet and modern dance. Susan Marshall, a good friend from modern dance, was one of the dancers. Phil Harland and Leona Wood were among the musicians, and although they were very good friends of Garry Margolis who was then my husband, I didn’t know them very well.

Although I was aware that Leona was an excellent belly dancer, in these practices she usually sat with the musicians and played the metal time-keepers (the double cowbell, and the taco-shaped one). Much later, I realized that Leona must have been practicing all of the African dance movements in front of her mirror at home, while making tiny notes and sketches. These she would later work into a group choreography by moving chess pieces on her dining table.

The first African dance we learned from Mr. Ayitee was done while singing a Christian hymn. Although I regret not being able to remember the dance, I have had no difficulty remembering the song which goes as follows:

*“What we sow — is what we reap,
What we sow — is what we reap,
Up on the mountain, down in the va-a-lley,
What we sow — is what we reap.”*

For good reason, this was never performed.

“Sohu Adawa,” however, an Ewe dance of the Yeve cult, would become a hugely successful, audience-wowing number for AMAN.

For this dance, Mr. Ayitee taught us to move our spines properly by curving forward on the “up beat” and arching backward on the accented “down beat.”



We were also to bend our bodies forward and bend our knees deeply. Next, we were to do that while holding our elbows out to the side with our forearms at right angles in “Stick ’em up!” fashion. After learning that basic movement, he taught us a variety of other movements.

For me, “Sohu” is the dance that completely changed my life. In 1970, AMAN was preparing for its first performance in the Los Angeles Music Center’s Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Leona called wanting to know if I would be willing to help fill out the ranks in JUST ONE NUMBER—“Sohu”— for this one particular very important AMAN show. Before saying yes, I told Leona I was pretty busy and made certain she understood that I would do just this ONE NUMBER, and just for this ONE PERFORMANCE. Of course, she understood. And of course, after that AMAN became my life—for the next eight years I performed in almost all of the “Oriental section” dances and became its ballet mistress, and gained a new family of lifelong friends.

Forward to 2013 when the 50th Reunion committee asked me to help resurrect “Sohu” for an African session, which would also be a special tribute to Phil Harland. I was glad to be asked, dug up a videotape of

>>>



>>> me and a few friends doing the original choreography, and worked hard to get into shape for leading it.

For me, and for the few others who had performed “Sohu” so many times years ago, doing it again in this situation was an experience far more significant and meaningful than any of us could have imagined. Thanks to Yeko Ladzekpo, the young woman whom Billy Burke arranged to lead a drumming group for “Sohu,” this was a true highpoint of the whole Reunion.

In a way, Yeko’s presence brought us full circle from those early days. Her father and uncles are of the Ladzekpo family of master musicians and dancers, who came from Ghana to teach at Berkeley and UCLA a few years after Ayitee and Bonsu. Yeko, as the new generation, is now teaching classes at Cal Arts and UCLA. She is a beautiful, delightful, and gifted young woman, with a passion and commitment to share the music, dance, and traditions of her West African cultural heritage.

Yeko arrived early on Friday to set up and lead our 9:00 a.m. session, after driving her small car loaded with instruments from Valencia to Palm Springs. For the initial practice, while I led a dance practice in

the hallway, Yeko taught the various drum, bell, and rattle parts to the musicians in the hotel ballroom. She, herself, played the master drum. By having listened to a CD of an old rehearsal cassette tape, Yeko matched the timing of the master drum signals to Leona’s choreography.

After an hour of practice, we dancers joined the musicians for the best grand revival we could muster. Even those of us who are now in our sixties and seventies managed to get through the full choreography—twice! After that, we all broke into a joyful cheer. It was a glorious feeling: dancing, drumming, being together again with these special friends. It felt good that younger dancers and musicians were eager to join in too. This was wonderful, but it got better.

While we were recovering, I asked Yeko, who also seemed happy with what had happened, to speak about the meaning of the movements and about “Sohu” in the cultural context of the Ewe people. Next, I asked her to compare our stylistic execution of the dance to the true authentic style, since we were, after all, “white folks.” She hesitated for a few seconds, and then, very diplomatically asked, “Who taught you this dance?” “Robert Ayitee,” I answered. “Oh,” said Yeko, “well that explains why you are dancing like men!”

Imagine our surprise. But the best thing possible happened after that. Yeko demonstrated what the women’s dance really is. It was so different: much freer arms, high springing legs. We wanted more.

Were Phil and Leona with us in body as well as memory that morning, I think they would have laughed and greatly enjoyed the incident. They would also have been delighted to discover this lovely young kindred soul. And if AMAN existed in a new incarnation, Leona would graciously have asked Yeko, “Would you be willing to come to help us out, for just this ONE dance?”



“WE’VE LOST OUR FORMATION,” RICK CUHNA SAID with a somber look upon his face, looking a bit like the role of the hardened commander who knew that he had just lost a good pilot at sea, or a person being hit with the frosty reality of knowing that ‘one of ours’ was never going to return again from the hundreds of missions we all ‘flew together’ as part of the Goin’ South Band. Our lives in music are very much like that of peaceful military missions. Every day that we performed an educational show for students, drove to the studio to record a score or sat up late at night composing music, we all came to know that it is nothing less than our mission in life. It is our calling in life. We have lost one of our own now. Vic Koler, our bass man, our rock steady pillar in the back of the band, holding down the foundation is no longer with us.

Vic was a musician, composer, studio recording artist, music director and educator who’s life work in music was a calling and mission that shaped his life and gave joy to many others. Vic not only will be remembered as a great bass player in a multitude of various styles of cultural music but as a rock-solid friend to those of us who played music with him and who knew him a bit more than just as a fellow musician. He was a man who stood by his children and helped to guide their lives not only by words but also by his deeds and actions as a good father. He was an example of living a good life that was realized by doing just that and being present in the moment.

Vic was born in 1953 in the small steel mill town of Lorain, which sits on the windy shores of Lake Erie about 45 miles west of Cleveland. At a very young age, Vic started playing with what people knew in the Midwest regions along the great lakes as the Junior Tamburitians, an offshoot local community group of the Duquesne University Tamburitians, a renowned Yugoslavian cultural music and dance ensemble. He gravitated right away to čelo or čelović, closest to the bass or berde of the traditional ensembles of Croatia and Slavonia. The bass man was emerging. He was a graduate of the Cleveland Conservatory of Music and also started playing mandolin with other musicians in the area. But rock and roll was calling and so was the electric bass. Vic played with his lifelong friend Rick Rebman in an early

folk rock band known as The Book of Strawberry, later to be known as a popular Cleveland rock band, Buttermellon. With his Ohio friend and up and rising singer/songwriter Chris Luke, he worked with producing legend Bill Szymczyk (The Eagles, B.B. King). Vic learned and gained knowledge in the field of music wherever and whenever he could, including working as a radio engineer at a Miami radio station. Later in Florida he worked, recorded and played with the Miami Sound Machine and earned a degree through the Jazz Music program at the University of Miami. Vic gained an in-depth education in music not only within the academic, artistic and creative fields of music, but the technical, digital and electronic worlds, as well.

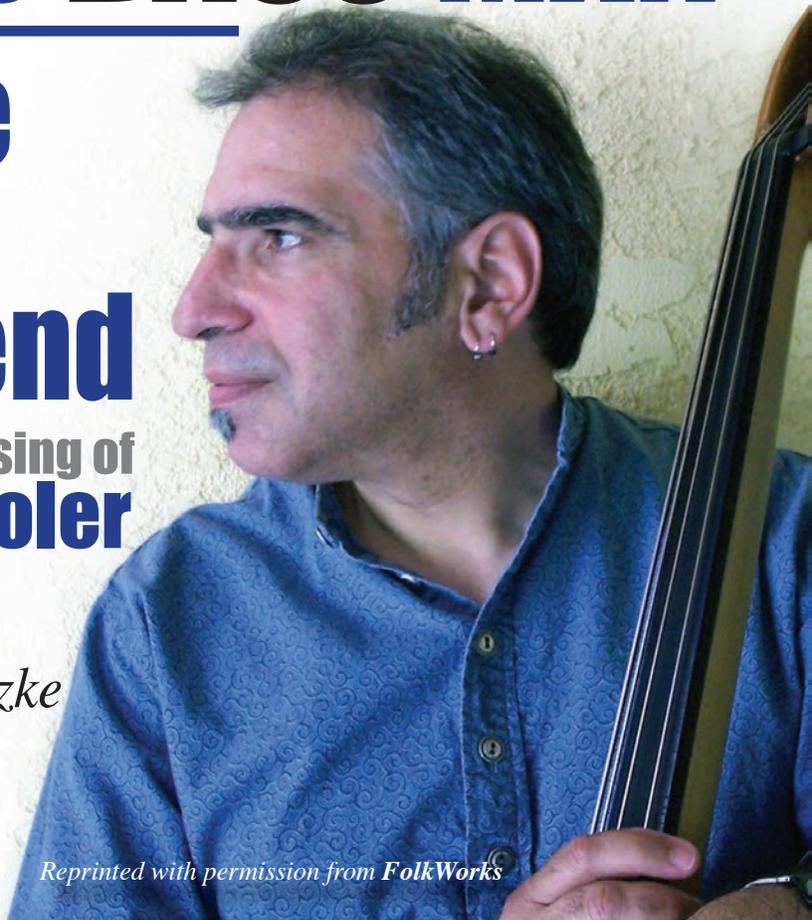
We had many groups together, aside from individual projects or independent gigs. In one such band, I had hand-picked an ensemble of excellent musicians to form a World Music group with three lead singers who had much experience in Eastern European vocal styles. This was on the cusp of a World Music movement which was gaining great popularity and strength in the local music scene in Los Angeles. Our new >>>

The BASS MAN

Ode to a Friend

The Passing of Vic Koler

By John Zeretzke



Reprinted with permission from FolkWorks

>>> group was on the cutting edge and had a nice following building in the city. In the middle of this came an offer by a well-known singer-gone-producer who offered the singers a recording contract but not the core band members. It drove a wedge right down the middle of our newly formed group. I will never forget what Vic said in that infamous 'band meeting' that afternoon in LA. Quietly, he said to us all that what was really important here is that we stick together as a group under our own name. That the band name that people all came to recognize was the team that we had built. It was in unity that a musical group gained popularity and recognition. Together we could build something unique musically and something that people would come to hear. That was the core of a powerful ensemble—A team of excellent and like-minded players united under one banner.

His work as Music Director with the AMAN Folk Ensemble brought in many great musicians from outlying communities and upheld the tradition of excellent music and exemplary musicianship that AMAN was recognized as upholding for many decades.

Vic always paid close attention to details. He knew and respected cultural traditions in music and always held close to principles, yet at the same time he could jam, improvise and create on the spot within a style of music.

Even when the recession hit and hit hard for the hard-working LA musician, Vic never complained. He rarely complained of anything. Those of us who worked with Vic would only see him writhe in pain and agony or kvetch when he had to endure the sounds of an incompetent musician banging away on his or her axe, out of tune players playing out of tune instruments or worst of all, pitchy vocalists who could not hold pitch. These things would drive Vic nuts. His wry sense of humor and overly animated face at these

moments was very funny and comedic, but certainly made his point clear.

His standards for excellent music and music making never wavered, on the stage or in the studio.

Vic was a rock to me as a friend while facing my darkest moments and trials in my personal life. "You'll be OK," he would say with a complete air of confidence that would ease my mind immediately. "It's hard, I know, but you'll be fine. And you will move on and things will get even better for you. Trust that." A religious leader, physiologist or therapist could not have been more effectively insightful in their delivery. Vic knew how to stop



and give someone his complete focus, no matter how busy he was.

Vic had a washtub bass made from a plastic 5-gallon bucket that he had painted over with a bass clef and some colorful designs. It was part of the Goin' South Band's educational show designed to talk about homemade American traditional instruments.

Vic would walk out on stage with his cartoonishly painted bucket with a broomstick handle and a gut string attached with a blank expression on his animated face. The straight man. After a little introduction, I would

tell the kids this is a homemade bass they could make themselves. Vic then started to pluck on that gutbucket a cool, bluesy groove that the kids would start to snap their fingers to. He made the bass accessible and a cool thing to play. I recently heard that one young man who saw our show years ago in his school never forgot Vic's part in the show, because he then went out and learned how to play the bass. This was a big part of what Vic did in his life—encourage and inspire others. He knew the true value of the work we were doing in the schools with youth and students in all walks of life.

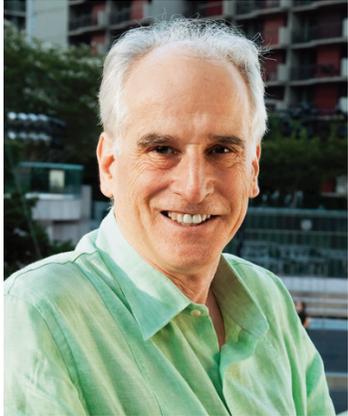
I don't know what happened to that plastic washtub bucket bass, but I kind of wish I had it. I have now a few instruments in my collection from players who are no longer with us in the living world. They hold a special place in my heart. Each instrument has a story behind it that tells a part of the history of the person who played it. These things carry spirit, I believe. And to share parts of the stories of who played them, how they were made and maybe a little tale of a magical night when they came alive in the hands of their masters...this is good stuff. It honors those who have walked before us and beside us on all the trails we have ventured down. Those shared paths we walked together become part of the rich tapestry of our own lives.

In the words of Augustus 'Gus' McCrae from Lonesome Dove, I remember now his parting words during his final moment in saying goodbye to his lifelong friend and partner. "My God, Woodrow. It's been quite a party, ain't it?"

The bits and pieces of our time together will be remembered by those who were able to share some wonderful moments with you, Vic. It's been a pleasure to share our time with you on and off the stage.

It has been quite a party, old friend.

Michael Alexander's History with the AMAN Folk Ensemble



CHAPTER TWO: *Entering the Local Dance Community and Establishing a Fund-Raising Apparatus for the Company*

and lots of local respect, I worked on an infrastructure model that I felt would secure the company's future for years to come.

Midway through my career, I heard a maxim that helped define what I seemed to instinctively know: performing arts companies, like three-legged stools, need three equally strong components for stability. For the stool, it's three solid legs! For the performing arts company, it is great art, effective management, and broad community support.

In 1969, when I began managing the AMAN Folk Ensemble (while still dancing), we certainly had one of those three elements—good art—and we were on our way to having the second and third. By the time I left AMAN in 1981, we had developed strength in all three areas. We had as much broad community support and respect as any other Los Angeles dance company, and more than most. We had a reputation for producing quality work worthy of a great New York Times review. We had a sophisticated management team handling fund raising, touring, education programs, and the public relations successes that secured AMAN's position as a community treasure.

Also by 1981, AMAN had the support of some of the most coveted individual, institutional and corporate donors in the community. And this is how that happened.

As a genre, Ethnic Dance was the outsider in the professional concert dance world. Ballet was the "old" established dance form and "modern dance" was the young upstart. American-based ethnic and traditional dance companies were even more marginalized than those coming from abroad. It was not easy for AMAN to get recognized as a member of the concert dance community—recognition that was essential to warrant favorable consideration from the grant panels that determined government funding. In the early '70s, our

There are a number of models of how to structure support for a performing arts company. While the artistic staff was creating works that earned AMAN incredible reviews

recognition as a member of the Los Angeles concert dance community had gotten established following our Music Center sellout. (See Chapter One in the Summer 2013 Newsletter for information on how that came about.)

Shortly after our first Music Center performance in March, 1971, I was invited to a dance community meeting hosted by C. Bernard (Jack) Jackson. I have long considered him one of my role models. Jack was the co-founder of Los Angeles' Inner City Cultural Center (ICCC). He had been a dance pianist for Alvin Ailey's dance company in New York (and for AMAN Women's Dance Director Leanne Mennin's parents' dance programs in Los Angeles). He was a composer and playwright. And he had become an arts activist of national importance.

Jack had just been appointed to the National Endowment for the Arts Dance Panel. In those days, the NEA had just one panel [of peer reviewers] for dance, who not only determined which dance artists would get much-coveted grants, but what kinds of programs should be created to support dance in the first place. He invited the local dance community to meet at the ICCC to discuss our issues relevant to the NEA so that he could bring them back to Washington in his new capacity as the panel's "rep" from Los Angeles.

I attended that first meeting on behalf of AMAN. This was my first official encounter with other dance professionals in Los Angeles. A few were from the ballet world. (LA at the time did not have a ballet company that could be equated with San Francisco Ballet or any of the major ones based in NYC. It had a number of ballet



school-based performance ensembles and a great number of nationally renowned ballet personalities—some leading fledgling companies). A number of other dance professionals were from modern dance and, perhaps, one or two others from traditional dance. (In subsequent years, I remember the flamenco dancer Lola

>>> Montez attending these meetings and for years threatening to “hang up her castanets” if things did not get better for her.)

This first meeting led to regular gatherings, and to the eventual formation of the Southern California Chapter of the Western Division of the Association of American Dance Companies. I was elected the Chapter’s first co-chair along with Paul Gleason, an associate of ballet choreographer Eugene Loring. At these meetings I started to formulate my ideas about what type of infrastructure would be ideal for AMAN, and what we would have to do to earn credibility as an arts organization.

At these and other dance community meetings I learned a lot about the differences that existed between ballet and modern dance companies. The lessons were essential to how I wanted to handle my responsibilities while developing the infrastructure for AMAN.

I noticed that the most successful ballet companies, even those in smaller communities around the country, are part of the elite cultural establishments of their communities. Arts philanthropists support ballet companies much as they support their local symphonies and museums. Ballet companies have broad-based community boards, support committees and the ability to survive leadership changes at both the artistic and managerial levels. Ballet companies have education programs and schools and create programs that broadly tie them to their communities.

The modern companies, even the most successful in the ‘70s, were (and for the most part, still are) almost exclusively personality based. They usually formed non-profit corporations to support the work of one individual’s choreographic vision.

Their board members were usually individuals with a direct connection to the director/choreographer. Some board members brought wealth and power; others, mostly passion to see that choreographer’s work supported. They rarely had support guilds as the symphonies and ballets did, and they usually did not run dance schools in the same way that ballet companies did. If they had an educational program, it was for advanced dancers who were interested

the community as worthy of public and private sector support. We would have to come to the attention of the major performing arts philanthropists in Los Angeles. We would have to establish AMAN as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation to get most of that support. And we would have to brand ourselves as a “product” appropriate for the same concert stages that were bringing the major international “ethnic” dance companies to audiences in cities large and small throughout the United



Diane Disney Miller



in the unique technique of the choreographer and had aspirations of joining the company or using that technique in a company of their own creation. Outside of New York City most modern dance companies gave main stage performances only when engaged by a “presenter”—an operation like the one established at UCLA to bring touring artists to Royce Hall—and rarely had an infrastructure capable of supporting hometown self-presentations. In the ‘70s most Los Angeles modern dance artists and companies only self-presented in a studio or one of our community’s small 100 seat venues.

I preferred the ballet company model. I wanted to work toward building a broad base of community support that would fill our concert venues, support our creative work and help position the company as a Los Angeles “institution.” I knew we would have to secure our position in

States. I was in my early 20s and was very fortunate to have people involved with more established institutions giving me advice in a number of areas.

In 1972 we incorporated the company. The initial board was made up exclusively of people involved with the company including the founding Artistic Directors Anthony (Tony) Shay and Leona Wood, a few other key performers and me. Because Stewart Mennin was involved with the music for both Leona’s and Tony’s repertoires, he was a logical choice as the first chair. My notes for the minutes of the first meeting state, “The meeting was called to order by Chair Stewart Mennin with the request that everyone act like an adult”—a tall order in those days! Within a short time UCLA Vice-Chancellor Norman Miller joined the board and became chair. Assistant Director Barry Glass’ father, movie producer George Glass, joined the board, as did UCLA professor

>>> Itzak Adizes, long-time supporter Dr. Leonard Lipman and a few other non-performers.

In 1970, Len Lipman said to me, “If you are serious about managing AMAN, you need to talk to Ruth Felt.” She was the second-in-command at UCLA’s performing arts presentation program, the Committee on Fine Arts Productions. She told me that I had to get in touch with Jerry Willis at Cal Tech to talk about the Alliance of West Coast Colleges for Cultural Presentations (AWCCP), which is known today as the Western Arts Alliance (WAA).

Jerry Willis invited me to attend the annual meeting of AWCCP that was being held in 1970 at the

introduced Igor Moiseyev’s troupe from Russia and Amalia Hernandez’ Ballet Folklórico de México to the United States. He seemed to appreciate our company, but when he found out that we did not have the support infrastructure that would be needed to subsidize touring as a troupe of professionals, he decided not to add AMAN to his roster.

This rejection did not stop us from dreaming of moving in a professional direction, but we realized that to be a large company of traditional performing arts professionals would mean that we had to have substantial “unearned” income (e.g. philanthropic support and government grants). We needed to have an aggressive fund

development program. We needed to have a development director.

In 1977, after a few failed efforts, we secured a National Endowment for the Arts grant to support the hiring of AMAN’s first development director.

Dorothy Chandler Pavillion final bow



Universal Sheraton. To build interest in AMAN, I prepared a tabletop display and distributed a booking brochure designed by Leona, who had a national reputation as a fine artist and as a graphic designer. We secured a few bookings at that conference and we started to gain recognition as a serious company intent on working the college circuit. Over the next few years, I had many opportunities to talk with the managers of other dance companies who were attending this conference to secure bookings. We shared information, and I hope I gave as much as I got, as I truly got a lot out of these encounters.

One of the more senior executives at the Music Center arranged for AMAN to audition for Sol Hurok—the most famous impresario of his time. He had

Ty Jurras, a public relations specialist whose company and associates had engaged AMAN for society events in Los Angeles, said we should first spend our money on a “development analysis” before engaging a development director. He pointed me to Jack Brown, a consultant who had been involved in development work at UCLA.

Brown and his team interviewed people from the Music Center, Los Angeles’ philanthropic community and other arts leaders familiar with the company. We were performing in the schools by this time, which brought us to the attention of the greater local arts community. Others knew of the company through me from my by-now intense networking.

The feedback was great. People

who knew the company gave us indications that we should be able to generate new philanthropic support. Not incidentally, Brown also reported that there was substantial confidence in me as the Company’s most highly visible liaison to the local arts establishment.

We presented another Music Center concert during this period. Brown reported to me that he saw Walt Disney’s daughter in the audience. Shortly after the concert, Richard Rowland, our full-time company manager showed me a very nice note from a Mrs. Ronald Miller, who identified herself as a new fan of our company and as a former member of the board of the lead organization coordinating our school performances. I realized that someone with board experience on another arts board might be interested in serving on our board. I showed the note to Jack Brown and he excitedly exclaimed, “That’s her. That’s Walt Disney’s daughter.” We responded enthusiastically to her kind note and immediately started thinking of her as a really valuable player in the next phase of our development process.

After Brown gave his report to the board, we began recruiting a Development Director. I talked to one of our best friends at the Music Center, Joan Boyett, the Director of Education at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, who had engaged the company for a number of projects over the years. She told me that one of the Blue Ribbon 400 volunteers, Evelyn Hoffman, wanted to “go professional” and she helped us connect to Evelyn. After interviewing a number of candidates with Brown, he and I met with Evelyn. There was no question that she was the right person for AMAN. Her personal circle included many of the most notable performing arts supporters in >>>

>>> Los Angeles—she played golf with them and socialized with them. We hired her in a flash, and AMAN’s fortunes changed almost immediately.

One of the first of the many things that Evelyn did for the company was to create the Women’s Council. (We followed that ballet model more than the modern dance model). Some of the most notable women in the city (based on reports in the Society Section of the Los Angeles Times) were recruited to join and take officer positions, except for the position of Council chair; she saved that spot for Diane Miller—Walt Disney’s daughter. After filling the Council with a great group of enthusiastic arts supporters Evelyn contacted Diane and told her that we were creating the Women’s Council and everybody wanted her to be chair. Diane accepted, and this move began a beautiful relationship with the Millers that included years of personal and corporate financial support, parties at their Encino estate and a prolonged residency at the EPCOT Center in Florida.

(I am going to leave it to others to report on specifics of the EPCOT residency that began in late 1981, because, though I began the negotiations with Disney for the residency, I left the Company before the contract was finalized and the residency began. It must be noted that this created an incredible opportunity for a cohort of AMAN’s dancers and musicians. The Company was contracted to perform seven days a week, five shows a day—each about 20 minutes—meaning that complex schedules needed to be worked out to allow every performer at least one day off per week. Certain “swing” performers had to be able to handle multiple positions in various choreographies. Members of the Company got a real taste of what it

meant to be professional in the style of Broadway performers versus the reality that even the busiest touring company members knew.

There were controversies as well. AMAN’s leadership came to their work from academic backgrounds in folklore, ethnomusicology and the like and some of the compromises requested by Disney were not to their liking. One particularly controversial issue was dancing as “background” during the nationally broadcast opening ceremonies of EPCOT. Marie Osmond was engaged to sing a pop-style song composed just for the opening with AMAN



dancers performing segments of various choreographies all around her. Dancing to anything but the appropriate music was anathema to AMAN’s artistic leaders and this became quite an issue. To say the least, Disney was not used to working with pre-existing dance and music companies. It engaged artists who would bend to the will of the creative teams that it had in place. This was not the last time that Disney worked with America’s arts community and it was not the last time points of conflict arose. The same happened when a colleague of mine worked on securing performers for California Adventure for the Anaheim park.

This residency also added to AMAN’s national renown. It provided company members five months of work and a unique opportunity,

at least for Los Angeles dancers, to earn an honorable and stable income doing what they loved to do. It also brought to EPCOT a level of authenticity in the performance field that was distinctly different from the style of presentations found elsewhere at the Florida park.)

Beginning in 1977, Evelyn Hoffman also helped connect the company to other local arts philanthropists. In a short time, the support for AMAN changed character, and with it, the nature of the board. A critical new member of the board was Chuck Redmond, a big dance fan and a Senior Vice-President of the Times Mirror Corporation. He was joined by Esther Wachtel, who later served as President of the Music Center, and a number of others who added considerable heft to the board and to the company’s reputation in the community.

High profile fund-raisers that even Dorothy Chandler attended became annual events, but at the same time, AMAN did not lose its connections to its earliest supporters. The annual AMAN Institute, the Fandango-like events at the Leonis Adobe, concerts, folk dance parties of all sorts and many other events kept the company connected to its earliest fans, to members of the many communities that identified with our repertoire, and to the young dancers and musicians that aspired to become members of this rare phenomenon—a traditional dance company that had become, like a ballet company, the dance darling of its home town.



Who is That AMAN Drummer?

Remembering
PHIL HARLAND

Compiled by Mardi Rollow

*Contributors: Michael Alexander, Aisha Ali,
Garry Margolis, Ian Price, Neil Siegel, Samira Tamer***1923**

Born and raised in Juneau, Alaska (he majored in physics)

c. 1941

Met Leona Wood at Boeing Airplane Company (the original name) in Seattle, where they were both working

Aisha: Leona used to see Phil at work and finally took the initiative to send a note to him through a friend saying that if he wanted to keep company with her she was interested. He responded and began to court her. Most of their time together was spent outdoors or at her family's home.

1943

Married Leona

1944

Moved to Florida; Phil went to school while Leona supported him by teaching art and painting portraits

1945

Moved to New York with Leona

Aisha: Phil and Leona frequented the Minerva Theater in Brooklyn to watch Egyptian musicals; Phil was very interested in playing the Egyptian tabla

1948

Moved to Los Angeles; worked at Douglas Aircraft, then McDonnell Douglas; took an early retirement

Garry: Phil was a brilliant mathematician and computer programmer who worked for Douglas Aircraft, first in Santa Monica; when that facility shut down, he took a company bus to the Long Beach facility every workday. He wrote the programs that

calculated the orbits of the first space satellites.

Michael: He was the astrophysicist who thought up the problems that other astrophysicists had to answer!!

c. 1958-'60s

Played in the Indonesian and Javanese gamelan orchestras at UCLA

Garry: I learned the rejong parts more quickly than he did and taught them to him, but then he'd learn them so solidly that he'd teach them back to me. When we got into a groove, we were playing faster together than either of us could play on our own. It was thrilling!

c 1962-75

Studied African drumming at UCLA with various African drummers including Kwasi Badu and Robert Ayite

Garry: While master drummer in both Asante and Ewe groups, he developed a notation system for their music called TUBS (time unit box system) that was superior to any previous system.

c. 1963

Studied Indian tabla with Harihar Rao, instructor at UCLA Institute of Musicology and co-founder, with Ravi Shankar, of the Music Circle

Neil: The oldest musical references I know of are his recordings on the Indian tabla; he recorded with Ravi Shankar. Somewhere, I have record albums—with the front covers painted over by Leona, presumably because she did not like the cover art!!!

nd

Studied Persian drumming and santur with Manoochehr Sadeghi

>>> 1965-c. 1975

As well as playing in AMAN orchestras, scored and taught some of the music for AMAN

Mardi: *Phil asked me to learn the Kwakiutl song the "corn maidens" were to sing, which was tricky rhythmically. He sang each line as he drummed and had me repeat after him. I was hopeless. But he calmly repeated the song phrases again. Thanks to his patience, I finally learned it. I have often remembered this experience, glad that I had the chance to get to know this quiet man a little better and grateful for his confidence in me.*

Michael: *Many of the early musicians in AMAN joined because they wanted to work with this "master" who could play more instruments well than just about anybody else in the company. He was our flamenco guitarist, kanunist, Ghanaian master drummer, Berber master drummer, Arabic dumbek and dirah player, drummer for Bhangra, santour player, saz player, and key instrumentalist for much of the AMAN repertoire. He was a teacher and a generous collaborator giving lots of others opportunities to shine.*

Late '60s and '70s

He was drummer on recordings for different rock groups

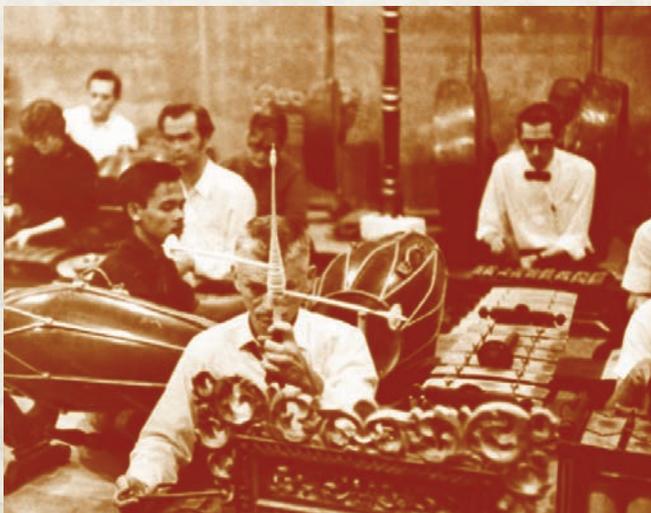
Aisha: *He liked to dance rock and knew the "mashed potatoes."*

Ian: *He was the drummer in "Along Comes Mary" by The Association.*

Michael: *He recorded with Herbie Hancock.*



Phil (foreground), master drummer in the Asante music group (photo: UCLA Institute of Musicology)



Phil (with bow tie on right) playing in the Javanese gamelan (photo: UCLA Institute of Musicology)

1975-c. 1977

Taught the UCLA West African drumming ensemble after Kwasi Badu left

c. 1978

Retired from McDonald Douglas

Samira: *Phil took an early retirement, paid off their house and completed his coursework in ethnomusicology; he began his thesis on Arabic rhythmic patterns under the tutelage of Dr. AJ Racy.*

1980

Died (by our calculations, he was only 56 years old)

Michael: *If ever there was an honest, equal partner love affair in AMAN, it was Phil and Leona's. Would be that everyone could marry the sweetheart that they met in their early twenties and stay true through their final days. Though she outlived him by over 20 years, she clearly loved him in an incredible way.*

Other tidbits

Neil: *Wrote an unpublished book on ethnic percussion.*

Michael: *He was a hell of a Go player. That East Asian game is more challenging than chess and he was quite a master.*

Garry: *In addition to his other talents, he was an excellent photographer; he took many beautiful publicity photos of Leona.*

Michael: *He designed their Kelton Avenue house without bringing Leona to the site (which is hard to believe considering what a control freak she was.*